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Rush relieves watch at BUMED

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By André B. Sobocinski, Navy Medicine Office of the Historian



Roland Hinton Perry's bronze likeness of Dr. Benjamin Rush (Photo by André B. Sobocinski)

With the [Bureau of Medicine and Surgery](#)'s departure from its Hilltop in Foggy Bottom this summer, we find ourselves saying good-bye to an old friend. Roland Hinton Perry's bronze likeness of [Dr. Benjamin Rush](#) has stood watch for 108 years of Navy medical history from his limestone perch on the north side of this campus. He has seen the disestablishment of the Naval Museum of Hygiene in 1905, and the relocation of the Naval Medical School and Naval Hospital Washington, DC, to Bethesda, MD, in February 1942. He has welcomed the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery here

in August 1942 and 70 year later stands witness to its transition to the former Raytheon complex in Falls Church, VA. Although Dr. Rush has remained silent on the subject, he too has found a new home. Within the next few months the statue will be moving to the [Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences \(USUHS\)](#).

The Nation's first monument to the colonial-era physician, pamphleteer, and signer of the Declaration of Independence has not always been accessible to those outside the government and many people do not even know it exists. This hidden memorial has also been very coveted over the years. During the Kennedy Administration, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall once proposed moving the statue to 18th and Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC (an area that was later dedicated to the memory of journalist Edward R. Murrow). In 1975, Dickinson College—one of three schools co-founded by Dr. Rush—sought Congressional support in transferring the statue to their campus. Almost 30 years later, Trustees of the institution paid for a cast copy of the statue, which now sits at the College's historic quadrangle. And in 1976, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda, MD, began their quest for the statue, over the years garnering support from Secretary of the Navy J. William Middendorf, and former Surgeons General VADM Donald Custis and VADM James Zimble.

With the Navy's departure from the Hilltop and the painful fact that BUMED would not be able to take the statue to Falls Church, the [Office of Medical History](#) in concert with the statue's "owner," the [Navy Art Museum](#), sought a solution to keep it in the purview of military medicine. With the choices available, it was determined that USUHS would be a fitting place for a statue of an old professor of medicine. The statue will remain on federal ground, under federal control, and remain within the Navy collection.

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One cannot deny that there can be few inspiring examples set before the students of USUHS than a statue of Dr. Benjamin Rush—an educator who taught so many of our republic’s first Army and Navy physicians.



Dr. Benjamin Rush has stood watch for 108 years of Navy medical history

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